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God has given to us, I know well, the liberty of use, but only so far as necessary; and He has determined that the use should be common. And it is monstrous for one to live in luxury, while many are in want. How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to live sumptuously! How much wiser to spend money on human beings, than on jewels and gold! How much more useful to acquire decorous friends, than lifeless ornaments! Who does not benefit so much as conferring favours has? It remains for us, therefore, to do away with this allegation: Who, then, will have the more sumptuous than the simpler? Men, I would say, if they make use of them impartially and indifferently. But if it be impossible for all to exercise self-restraint, yet, with a view to the use of what is necessary, we must bid a long farewell to these superfluities.

Migrantes  
y  
Rancheros  
  
San Antonio  
plaza  
olivos  
  
y las  
mañanas  
lambán

## Mission: A Latino Pastoral Theology

## Child Abuse in the Hispanic Community:

## A Christian Perspective

In fine, they must accordingly utterly cast off ornaments as girls' gewgaws, rejecting adornment itself entirely. For they ought to be adorned with the inner woman beautiful. For in the soul alone are beauty and deformity shown. Wherefore also only the virtuous man is really beautiful and good. And it is laid down as a dogma, that only the beautiful soul alone appears through the beautiful body, and blossoms out in the flesh, exhibiting the amiable comeliness of self-control, whenever the character like a beam of light gleams in the form. For the beauty of each man is righteousness, and temperance, and majesty, and godliness. The beautiful man is, then, he who is just, temperate, and in a word, good, not he who is rich. But now even the soldiers wish to be adorned, not having read that poetical saying:

Kenneth G. Davis

## Reseñas bibliográficas

George Cruz

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## Reflexiones

## teológicas

## desde

## el

## margen

## hispano

"With childish folly to the war he came,  
Laden with store of gold."<sup>1</sup>

But the love of ornament, which is far from caring for truth, but claims the body for itself, when the love of the beautiful has changed to empty show, is to be utterly expelled.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 872.

¿el Antiguo?

## PRESENTACION

Los dos artículos principales del presente número nos ayudan a desarrollar una pastoral para nuestro pueblo. El primero, por el Dr. **Harold Recinos**, trata de establecer las líneas generales de tal pastoral. El segundo, por el Dr. **Kenneth G. Davis**, sugiere el modo en que tal pastoral se ha de relacionar con el problema específico del abuso contra los niños en nuestras comunidades. El Dr. Recinos es miembro del cuerpo docente de Wesley Theological Seminary, en Washington, D.C. Es conocido en la comunidad hispana por su libro, *Hear the Cry!* El Dr. Davis, quien ha escrito anteriormente para *Apuntes*, se ha distinguido por sus esfuerzos en relacionar la "terapia de los doce puntos" con la comunidad hispana. El presente artículo es su segunda contribución en este sentido. Pronto espera publicar un libro sobre el asunto.

Los cuatro autores de *Reseñas bibliográficas* son conocidos para nuestros lectores, pues sus trabajos han aparecido antes en nuestras páginas.

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## Mission: A Latino Pastoral Theology

*Harold Recinos*

The church was called into being to continue the mission of Jesus in the context of a world in need of hope and liberation. What is the mission and purpose of the church? How has the church interpreted its mission within the totality of human existence? Whose interests has it served? Have the poor had good news preached to them? Do persons crippled by socially structured oppression walk? Do the blind to human suffering regain sight? Do the deaf to the cries of the little ones hear? Can the church present itself before wretched humanity and claim to have lived out the call of the human being from Nazareth? The foundation upon which these questions rest is the knowledge of God. The Scriptures teach us that true knowledge of God means doing justice to the poor and the oppressed. Nothing is more fundamental to the mission of the church than this "gnosis" and practice of faith. The God of the patriarchs, the exodus, of Mary's Magnificat, and Jesus's empty tomb is not interested in solemn assemblies. Instead, the God who is partisan to the poor's struggle to transform radically the social relations of history in the direction of justice desires a mission concerned with letting ". . . justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (Amos 5:24). God can never be known apart from the practice of justice and love on behalf of those in the underside of history.

The silence of the North American latino church caused by its overwhelmingly privatized Christianity must be broken. We have been a church made up of the poor, but lacking the social voice that comes from below. That silence leads to the condemnation of history's underside to the wretched suffering of Golgotha. Churches that no longer believe that it is important to examine their liturgies, prayers, worship life, and Christian practice from the perspective of their relationship to the suffering poor are living a false piety --the spirituality of solemn assemblies! The church dare not forget that only a God who suffers can save. Jesus of Nazareth from Galilee taught followers of the *way* that much. The church must never forget that in Jesus God's word became flesh in the form of a poor human being who lived in a geographical area that had little significance even in the time of Solomon --Galilee. God becomes one of the world's outcasts by virtue of the Galilean incarnation. Virgilio Elizondo, in an important theological reflection on the significance of Galilee for both divine revelation and the mission of the church, said: "One cannot follow the way of the Lord without appreciating the scandalous



way of Jesus the Galilean.<sup>1</sup> The church dare not continue to cultivate the Jesus of the unscandalous cross and turn its back on the reality of socially organized suffering in the latino community. For the church to know God and remain faithful to its missionary vocation it must walk with the poor in the service of justice.

The latino church in the U.S. has witnessed the emergence of a mission revitalization movement on the horizon of global history that has been defining what it means to walk with the God who suffers with the poor. This mission renewal movement is rooted in the experience of Christians in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Without doubt history's underside --Latin America, Africa, and Asia-- is laying the foundation for Christianity into the next millennium. Today's church universal is captive of a mission renewal movement that requires that the once muted cry of wretched humanity be heard in terms of its salvific message for all. Today, the latino church on this side of the Río Grande finds itself in the position of listening to new voices, viewing new existential experiences, examining new theological interpretations of the faith tradition, and considering liberationist embodiments of ethical activity. The scandalous way of Jesus the Galilean means that society's "non-persons" determine what is ultimate for the practice of faith.

The North American latino religious community has evolved quite independently of the liberationist tradition on the other side of the Río Grande. More recently, the hermeneutical revolution of the liberationist tradition institutionalized at Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) has begun to shape faith perspectives in some sub-divisions of the North American latino church. For the most part, our latino church experience in the context of the States, possessed by the legacy of 19th Century North Atlantic missionary theology, has operated out of a hermeneutics of passive submission to white society. The profoundest expression of this fact is to be found in a preponderant pietistic tradition that insists on inspiring an escape from reality into an inner personal faith experience. The latino church in the U.S. must lose its privatized Christian posture and develop a hermeneutics rooted in its historical experience of oppression and poverty.<sup>2</sup> The poor hold the interpretive key to humanity's relationship to God in Jesus Christ. Through them the latino church learns that life can be structured in such a way as to reflect the intentions of the gospel for human society and for the individual.

Rediscovering our identity in the existential reality of oppression means understanding that Christian missionary activity today entails action directed

<sup>1</sup>. Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>. See: Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1982); Ada María Isasi Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979); Harold Recinos, *Hear the Cry!* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); Antonio Stevens-Arroyo, *Prophets Denied Honor: An Anthology on the Hispanic Church in the United States* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1980).



toward the structural transformation of society in the direction of God's reign.<sup>3</sup> The latino church in the U.S. cannot afford to follow the theological criteria of "white society" that keep one personally neutral before history. Latinos in the U.S. religious community must rediscover God and Christ as the liberators of human history on behalf of the poor. Our missiological approach in the world demands understanding rigorous social, economic, political historical, and cultural analysis. The latino church in the U.S. must devote itself to the God who created people for freedom (Gen 1:26) --not to be dehumanized and crushed daily! Our church must be prepared at any moment to embody the political vocation of ministry and say no to all forms of cultural, political, economic, social, and theological domination that engender wretched existence in the latino community. The latino church in the U.S. must both socialize its understanding of the gospel and confront "white society" with God's requirements of justice. Allow me to share this reflection written on another occasion about the mission of the latino church:

The latino church in the U.S. must reflect on its role in North Atlantic society in light of the experience of oppression in white society. It must discover the political import of God's preferential option for the poor. It must serve as a light for others, enabling white society to see the context of the barrio and the human disfigurement it represents.<sup>4</sup>

The cry of humanity caused by human decisions and organized structures requires that the gospel be made credible to society's "non-persons" in the form of prophetically structured ethical engagement. The latino church in the U.S. is being challenged by its sister church tradition of transformation of the south to take an active and responsible role in the transformation of structured evil in the direction of organized justice and love.<sup>5</sup> Churches that are blind and silent in the face of the human suffering of the poor in the U.S. are being asked to see the great events of history from the perspective of the outcasts; the powerless; rejected humanity; the death-toll from wars in Central America; the junkie on the corner; the homeless family of a shanty-town of an urban ghetto; the unemployment line; the redlight districts of local prostitutes; the AIDS patient's bed; pregnant teenagers; the town prison; the culturally isolated and poor refugee family; the broken home; the high-school dropout. God-in-Jesus Christ viewed history from such a perspective. Bearing witness to God-in-Jesus Christ means taking responsibility for the organization of historical experience in society from the existential reality of those below. The practice of Jesus requires that the church root its identity and action in the experiential context of the poor.

<sup>3</sup>. Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality and Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1988), pp. 80-86.

<sup>4</sup>. Harold Recinos, *Op. Cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup>. See: Richard Shaull, *Heralds of a New Reformation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1984); William Tabb, ed., *Churches in Struggle: Liberation Theologies and Social Change in North America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986).



Christ walks the village streets of Central and South America and the barrio alleyways of the U.S. Christ continues to place himself at the service of the reign of God in the struggle of history's forgotten persons for a more humane world. We are reminded today by our brothers and sisters of the Church of the Southern hemisphere that Christ died to give life to the poor and those who stand with them. In the context of North American latino experience, this means that Jesus eats today at the table of the hungry; Christ spills his blood with the little García girl shot to death by a stray bullet from a drug pusher's gun; the Galilean Lord bears on his arms the needle tracks of those who repeatedly inject themselves with dope; the carpenter from Galilee lays on a hospital bed forgotten by family and friends and eaten away by AIDS; the Word made flesh shivers on cold winter nights with the homeless and rejected refugees living in abandoned buildings, parks, and shanty-towns; and the wounded Son of God weeps with the mothers of the disappeared of both Latin America and *el barrio*. The God who is identified with the poor constitutes the proper subject of adoration for the latino church in the U.S. If we listen closely to God's word for us today, we hear that the Christian vocation for the latino church in the U.S. is best understood when the church walks with Christ along unconventional avenues that cut a path to God's reign already present in the poor's struggle for justice and life.

The profound meaning of the word made flesh in a Galilean Jew who himself was a member of an oppressed class and race will become rediscovered once the latino church rereads its mission and purpose in the world from the perspective of its own experience with oppression, injustice, and poverty. Jesus of Nazareth from Galilee took upon himself the flesh of poverty and historical rejection (Phi 2:5-9) to overcome the things that are. Rereading the mission of the church from the perspective of marginal humanity will enable the church to discover that authentic Christian pastoral activity means participating in God's struggle to right the human condition by enabling trampled humanity to know historical salvation. The mission of the latino church in the U.S. at the close of the second millennium requires embracing the God of Mary's Magnificat who scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, put down the mighty from their places of homicidally structured power, and raised the poor in history to become instruments of divine salvation for all humanity (Lk 1:51-52).

The practice of Jesus made followers critically aware of the structures of systemic oppression operating in Roman occupied Palestinian society.<sup>6</sup> Our church is required to embody a practice of faith no less capable of making the faith community critically aware of the oppressive structures at the root of latino suffering. The latino church in the U.S. must incarnate itself in history as a Christ-centered institution of social criticism and agent of social structural transformation. This means that its leadership must initiate in their respective communities a process of issue identification, consciousness-raising, and leadership development.

<sup>6</sup> See: Severino Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1981); George Pixley, *God's Kingdom* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1981); Norman Gottwald, ed., *The Bible and Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1983).



Connecting the rereading of missionary identity to the process of liberating pedagogy will produce church communities better able to understand that the parenthood of God and the equality of all persons means that social inequality, human injustice, economic exploitation, racism and sexism, "language-ism" or the attempt to absolutize a single linguistic modality, and wretched poverty are scandalous to God.

### The Church Reinvented

Latin American base Christian communities have a great deal to teach the latino church in the U.S. Base communities have helped Christians struggling against oppression in the context of Latin American society define faith beyond strictly private and individual terms. Personal faith is understood in light of the larger social reality in which the poor live. The role of faith is to create a movement for just change that begins from the bottom. Poor Christians in Latin America are restructuring the status quo church in light of a rereading of scripture which recognizes the privilege of the poor and oppressed in the reign of God (I Cor 1:27-28; Mt 25). Base Christian communities have taken the Bible and organized the poor around bible study, worship and community works. Out of this simple faith approach the missional reinvigoration of God's people has been made possible. The base Christian communities constitute a growing social movement that is attempting to restructure both society and the church in the direction of God's reign of justice, love, and community. The social appropriation of Scripture has enabled poor Christians in Latin America to participate in revolutionary processes demanding liberation from structured conditions of oppression.<sup>7</sup>

The latino church in the U.S. might consider the base Christian community model of church in its attempt to struggle with the question of social justice in the context of the ghetto. The churches' leadership should take pains not to mystify the base community ecclesial model. Many latino churches in the U.S. have operated out of a model of church organized around Bible study, prayer and community work. The fundamental difference between the *barrio* and the base Christian experience of Latin American society rests in the experiential framework of *conscientization*. What has been lacking in the *barrio* base Christian experience is the element of critical assessment and active engagement with social reality at a level capable of impacting the structures of "white society." The base Christian community model of church coming out of the context of Latin American society can be utilized to enable the *barrio* poor to reappropriate the basic structure of the biblical story: God identifies with the poor and oppressed by choosing their side, and God participates in their struggle to be liberated from the dehumanizing conditions of ghetto existence. The Christian life is more than a private apolitical existence waiting for ultimate fulfillment in God "up there." It requires confrontation with power in history where the blood of our people is exacted daily to fuel the homicidal structures of capitalism.

<sup>7</sup>. See: Phillip Berryman, *Religious Roots of Rebellion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1980); Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds., *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1981).



Radicalizing the faith perspective of the latino church in North America means encountering the God of the poor and bearing witness to God's word of liberation in the context of a world structured to promote oppression, alienation and human suffering. Faith must be put back into history. The base Christian communities understand that faithfulness to Jesus of Nazareth means identification with the justice struggles of the poor, marginal, despised persons of color, an underside of society. Jesus's ministry did not focus on society's respectable members. Instead, he went directly to society's outcasts offering them life in abundance and an opportunity to participate in the transformation of their world. Giving the base Christian community model the specifications of the North American latino community will issue forth in renewed faith insight into the mystery of God. The latino church on this side of the Río Grande will learn that an authentic proclamation of a God who loves persons includes effective opposition to those forms of society that crush persons each day. God has chosen the wretched of the earth to conduct a liberative process encompassing the rich and poor in a single historical stream not characterized by the concentration of wealth, but its redistribution.<sup>8</sup>

A deep sense of communion between persons characterizes the base community experience.<sup>9</sup> The Bible is discovered in that context in terms of its radicality. Persons are enabled by this reading of Scripture out of their own experience of oppression to feel empowered and emerge subjects of history. A liberation missiology is at the heart of the small grass-roots communities. Social engagement flows from the spiritual conviction that God is an advocate of the poor, that the integrity of faith is measured by our action toward securing the well-being of the marginal, and that economic systems are to be judged in terms of their relation to the poor. The base Christian communities speak directly to the latino church of North America challenging it to develop a social, economic, and political analysis by which it can link faith to empowerment. Theology in the context of the barrio must make it clear to the faith community that God's promise of a new heaven runs counter to the dehumanization and social invisibility that mark the existential experience of the ghetto; hence, an important dimension of the mission of the latino church in the U.S. includes enabling people to discover their own power. Here I recall the words of Virgilio Elizondo:

An important element of this new power is that it is not power for the sake of personal gain, but power for the sake of all the oppressed,

<sup>8</sup>. See: Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *The Politics of Compassion* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1988); Elsa Támez, *The Bible of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1982); Iglesia guatemalteca en el exilio, *Cristianos: ¿por qué temer a la revolución?*.

<sup>9</sup>. See: Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1986). I am very indebted to Boff for drawing my attention to the five salient features he observes operating in the base communities: 1) life is celebrated in the grass-roots communities; 2) the social flows from the religious; 3) capitalism is the root cause of human suffering; 4) network building between the grass-root communities and other justice oriented organizations is essential; and 5) the political vocation of ministry has been rediscovered.



ignored, forgotten, and exploited members of society. The powerless are recouping power, but it is not the power of this world, which works for self-gain, but the power of the gospel, which works for the betterment and liberation of all, especially those in greatest need.<sup>10</sup>

The poor of the base Christian communities have opted against capitalism. The value system that capitalism generates is characterized by a pattern of social irresponsibility, inhumanity to other persons, and desire for private gain. These values are contrary to the will of God and the imperatives of the gospel of Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee. The grass-roots communities are living out the very faith of our Galilean Lord by engaging in the prophetic denunciation of a system of political economy that condemns so many to the violence of Golgotha. Members of the base Christian communities believe the capitalist system is an incurable disease. *Das Kapital* is not the root of this insight; rather, the reading of the biblical story of God's struggle to right oppression and exploitation in history constitutes the source of prophetic revelation.

For the latino church in the U.S. prophetic denunciation of a political economic system that organizes death for its people is essential. Indeed, we do well to remember how closely linked to the capitalist system are the majority of the latino community's 65 newspapers, 200 radio stations, and 167 television stations.<sup>11</sup> The Christian Right broadcast system seduces latinos in the U.S. into linking their faith to the conservative Right agenda with no thought about the implications for the *barrio* and the people of Latin America. Our prophetic denunciation of capitalism includes indicating the disservice the communication media are rendering to the latino struggle for justice. The leadership of the latino church must seize the freedom God has provided to it in the pulpit and help persons to see that the requirements of capitalism and the imperatives of the gospel are incompatible. Only the politics of equality and the economics of justice should fuel the missionary energy of the latino church in this land. Our responsibility involves linking Christian ethical activity in the *barrio* and the village streets of Latin America to a single focus of prophetic endeavor.<sup>12</sup>

### Mission Outlook

Latinos in the context of the U.S. have been margined from the centers of social, political, and economic power. "White/Black society" ignores the fact that about three-fourths of all Mexican Americans, half the Puerto Rican community,

<sup>10</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> Rafael Valdivieso, Cary Davis, "U.S. Hispanics: Challenging Issues for the 1990's" *Population Trends and Public Policy*, No. 17, December 1988, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> See: Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Renny Golden, Michael McConnell, *Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1986); Daniel Rodríguez *La primera evangelización norteamericana en Puerto Rico: 1898-1930* (México: Ediciones Borinquen, 1986).



one-fourth of all Cubans, and twenty-percent of the Central and South American populations were born in the U.S. Moreover, the latino community in the U.S. represents one of the fastest growing groups in America given high birth rates (fifty-percent higher than the U.S. average) and the flow of immigration. Latinos have a young age structure with a median age of 26, compared to 32 for non-latinos.<sup>13</sup> What stands behind the situation of latino invisibility in North American society? The bi-racial structure of North American society has contributed a great deal to our marginalization and veiled existence. From the time of the civil war fought between the North and the South the mind of "white society" has perceived issues of oppression through black/white lenses. The Mexican/American war has not commanded a similar response. Latinos have remained largely an invisible community in North America despite the fact that all the territory from Colorado to California once belonged to Mexico. Moreover, "white" and "black" societies have yet to recognize that the North American principles of civil disobedience propounded for modernity by Henry David Thoreau were forged around a Latin American issue --the U.S. expansionist war with Mexico.

History has assigned the latino church in the U.S. the role of prophetic missionary in the New Macedonia of "white/black society."<sup>14</sup> Latino institutions need to impact "white/black society" in such a way that a more comprehensive understanding will issue forth in the North American mind concerning the existential situation of oppression and the need for liberation: First, the latino church can help to "de-americanize" the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth so that the good news is prevented from being "comfort for the oppressor" and an "opiate for the oppressed." Second, the latino church in the U.S. must help itself and "white/black society" understand the relationship between the structured evil dominating both the life of the latino in the barrio and on the other side of the Río Grande. Third, latino grass-roots church communities must be empowered to develop a global consciousness that fully questions the U.S. presumed right to create the conditions for big business to "rob" and "exploit." Fourth, the latino church in the U.S. must participate in the struggle of its brothers and sisters to the south directed toward the dismantlement of the "national security" ideology that justifies human brutalization each day.<sup>15</sup>

Other related dimensions of the political vocation of latino mission out of the context of the U.S. include ministry to the pain and brokenness of our people in

<sup>13</sup> Rafael Valdivieso, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 1-5.

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent discussion of the role of persons of color in the North Atlantic world see: Orlando Costas, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>15</sup> One extremely influential latino institution is the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) in San Antonio, Texas. It was founded in 1971 to fill a need largely neglected by the institutions of learning and conscious of the dominant society. The Center's role has been providing theological and pastoral guidelines for the latino church; and provide courses to latino and white laity focusing on the Latin American theological experience. The Center contributed greatly to the dissemination of liberation theology in the U.S.



the ghetto. Faith witness in the context of the *barrio* needs to make real for people the God who brings life out of death, and hope out of despair. More than a million refugees from Central America are residing in the U.S. experiencing poverty, cultural isolation, and fear of discovery. The Salvadoran community alone represents about half of the estimated refugee population in the U.S. Most Salvadorans came after 1982, following the escalation of the war in El Salvador, which means that the amnesty clause of the regressive Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986) did very little to improve their situation in the U.S. Less than two-percent of all political asylum petitions filed by a Salvadoran or Guatemalan are granted, due to opposition from the State Department. Granting political asylum to a Central American would be the equivalent of U.S. foreign policy "self-condemnation."

Salvadorans and Guatemalans are bearing witness to the brutalization of humanity occurring in Central America by giving testimony in our *barrio* churches. The latino church in the U.S. dare not close its ears to the cry of the people of Central America bellowing in the context of the *barrio*. From our Guatemalan brothers and sisters we hear that since the mid-60's, with the support of the U.S. government, the Guatemalan regime has killed more than a hundred thousand civilians. Eighty to one hundred persons disappear each month to this day. The cry of El Salvador reaches the ears of latino Christians in the *barrio* by way of the voices of five hundred thousand refugees who tell of over seventy thousand deaths in El Salvador since the early-80's. We can remember the words of Archbishop Romero broadcast over the diocesan radio and directed to the soldiers. Words ordering the soldiers to stop the repression, and which cost his life: "In the name of God, in the name of our tormented people who have suffered so much and whose laments cry out to heaven, I beseech you, I beg you, I order you, I order you in the name of God, to stop the repression!"<sup>16</sup>

The North American latino church's mission involves advocating the cause of Central American refugees within U.S. society and church denominational structures. Worship services ought to reflect the refugee presence in faith communities. All levels of the church should be engaged in examining the plight of the refugee in the U.S. and the effect the new immigration law is having on them. Local faith communities should network with immigrant and refugee rights organizations to strengthen their advocacy role for changes in U.S. foreign and immigration policy. Latino churches in the context of the *barrio* ought to look seriously at the role of sanctuary and immigration law paralegal training as mission responses.<sup>17</sup> Undoubtedly, understanding the mission of the church in these prophetic terms means entering an arena of history characterized by conflict with conservative forces within the church who would prefer to serve the bully interests of a life-denying status quo. Our role is to adore the God identified with the

<sup>16</sup>. Martin Lange, Reinhold Ibacker, eds., *Witnesses of Hope: The Persecution of Christians in Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1981), pp. 79-80.

<sup>17</sup>. See: Iglesia Metodista Unida, *Amén al extranjero* (New York: Comité Metodista Unido de Auxilio, 1988).



refugees and their struggle at all costs. Borrowing a phrase from Julia Esquivel's poem, *Thanksgiving Day in the United States*, the U.S. latino church's role is not to be deceived into worshipping ". . . the Beast in the Bank of America or in others of its temples."<sup>18</sup>

The streets of the *barrio* invite the latino church to a life of prophetic mission. Signs of despair pervade the streets waiting for the winds of hope and transformation. On the *barrio* streets it is not difficult to tell that between 1979 and 1987 poverty in the latino community increased ninety-percent. In that period of time, the ranks of the latino poor grew from 2.9 million to 5.5 million.<sup>19</sup> The latter represents approximately one-fourth of the estimated twenty million latinos in the U.S. You know it is easy to find the four out of every ten latino youths who drop out of high school hanging around the street corner at any given time. Some of them are hooked on dope and filled with a sense of futurelessness. Allow me to share this poem inspired by one of these youths and the system of oppression that held him captive on the corner:

### Been Waiting

Rudy's been waiting on the corner for his big hit.  
he's been waiting now for ten years and the tracks  
in his arms where Señora Heroína does come quiet

him for the wait while promising a more complete  
destiny someday. he's been waiting for the lover he  
dreams of, for bitterness to run away, for a blade  
of grass to grow from the crack in the sidewalk that  
he stares at in the wait, for Orchard Beach  
to be in his pocket so he can reach in for a calm  
feel to living; he's been waiting for the welfare  
check, for the roaches to take a walk from his one  
room where there ain't no food no way.

he's been waiting to kick a jones he doesn't have,  
for his mother who long ago said good-bye, for his  
country to be born in him. he's been waiting for  
Lelo, who left the waiting corner to join the navy  
and kick his brothers' asses down in Vieques under  
orders just to live. he's been waiting for spring

and summer and fall and forget about winter because  
the corner is cold. he's been waiting for the right  
time of day or night to think about waiting some

<sup>18</sup>. Julia Esquivel, *Threatened with Resurrection* (Illinois: Brethren Press, 1982).

<sup>19</sup>. Rafael Valdivieso, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.



more.

Junkies like Rudy have a three times greater risk of contracting the deadly disease AIDS than do Whites. Sadly, most latino churches in the *barrio* have not been conduits of God's love offering hope, friendship, justice advocacy, and community.

The question of language is another area for the latino church to develop a focused pastoral response. Spanish is one of the most strongly maintained ethnic languages in the U.S.; however, linguistic personality alone can no longer decide one's legitimate claim to latino cultural identity. Latinos are a linguistically diverse people in the context of the U.S. The totality of one's socio-cultural inheritance must be made part of the identity equation of latinos. The church needs to recognize the very definite bilingual modality of the U.S. latino community --and even English monolingual modality! Many latinos shaped by the *barrio* experience use English, Spanglish or a bilingual expression to communicate. The church is often viewed by them as a conservative and historically out of touch institution. Many of these person are conscientized members of the latino community who focus their justice struggles through civic organizations.<sup>20</sup>

Recently I attended a meeting of latinos serving in executive positions within the United Methodist Church. The moderator of the conference very proudly stated how material is finally being produced in Spanish by latinos through one of the communications agencies. Clearly, the indigenization of theological, biblical, and social ethical study materials can only be applauded. I wondered, however, about the implicit negation of the linguistic diversity of the latino community in the U.S. Many latino organic intellectuals writing from the perspective of their respective disciplines do so in English; indeed, a whole school of Nuyarican poets write in English or Spanglish.<sup>21</sup> Their reflection is no less latino! The language of the North American latino church ought to reflect the totality of our people's linguistic reality. The church in the U.S. can address the question of language by bringing down the barriers that promote dishonesty concerning the linguistic reality of North American *hispanos*.

The latino church in the U.S. is invited by the Crucified God in the *barrio* to become the voice of those who suffer because of unjust situations, and have no other avenue of appeal in "white society." Christian missional responsibility requires fully embracing the prophetic role to which God has called the latino

<sup>20</sup>. A number of organizations come to mind in this discussion such as COPS, the United Farm Workers, the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, Industrial Areas foundations, and the Mexican and Puerto Rican Legal Defense Funds.

<sup>21</sup>. Good examples of this type of writing are the works by: Miguel Piñero. Pedro Pietri, Miguel Algarín and Piri Thomas. Also see: David T. Abalos, *Latinos in the United States: The Sacred and the Political* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); Rodolfo O. de la Garza, et. al., *The Mexican American Experience* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

church in matters urgent for our time. The God of private spirituality must be ejected by the latino church from its life. Spiritual impoverishment comes with the removal of the gospel from that place where it reveals the just and creative Spirit of God --the world and struggles of the poor. Only the God of the scandalous cross who identifies with the struggles of the poor to create a more just and humane society should occupy the faith perspective of the latino church in the U.S. The wretched suffering of our people, the stench of death pervading the *barrio* and Latin American village streets, requires a church capable of confronting the structured evil of history with God's word of justice and radical historical action.

Again, the latino church in the *barrio* is already a grass roots community, but it is still searching for the element of conscientization. It should not grow weary of the voices of our Latin American sisters and brothers in the *barrio* who are one of the conscientizing instruments of God. Whatever the latino church decides about its mission these words of Paul from the letter to the Galatians speak to it: *And let us not grow weary of well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart* (Gal 6:9).

### Resumen

*La iglesia latina tiene ya la ventaja de ser verdaderamente una organización del barrio. Sin embargo, pierde su efectividad para la obra del Evangelio cuando acepta una interpretación privatista e individualista del mismo. Podemos aprender mucho de las comunidades eclesiales de base en América Latina. Si bien la tradición de los cultos de barrios y los estudios bíblicos se parece mucho a esas comunidades, tenemos que aprender de ellas el proceso del análisis concientizador. Además, tenemos que aprender unos de otros, y recordar que nuestra identidad cultural es múltiple y diversa. En el idioma, por ejemplo, mientras muchos son bilingües, otros hablan solamente español o inglés. Eso somos, y eso hemos de afirmar.*

### ERRATA:

En el último número de *Apuntes*, se publicaron dos conferencias del Dr. Luis N. Rivera Pagán. En la primera de ellas, desaparecieron muchas de las notas al calce, y otras aparecieron mal ubicadas. No sabemos a ciencia cierta a qué se debió esto. En algunas de nuestras culturas ancestrales, diríamos que "la culpa la tuvo el totí". Hoy diríamos, "computer error". En todo caso, los lectores que deseen comprobar alguna referencia podrán obtener la información correcta en nuestras oficinas. Gracias, y perdón.



## Child Abuse in the Hispanic Community: A Christian Perspective

Kenneth G. Davis

This study will explore the efficacy of Parents Anonymous (PA) as a treatment for the Mexican descent perpetrators of physical child abuse and neglect (CAN) within the contiguous United States of America. To do this a description of the phenomenon of CAN in this population will be made, a comparison with PA possibilities will follow, and the article will conclude by discussing the role of the pastoral agent in interfacing this treatment modality with this specific population.<sup>22</sup>

### Child Abuse and Neglect in the Mexican Descent Population

This description is limited to *physical* abuse and neglect as nationally recognized by the U.S. department of health and human services and summarized below.<sup>23</sup>

Physical abuse is an action taken by a caretaker which results in demonstrable harm or endangerment of the child s/he is charged to care for. Physical neglect includes the refusal or delay of health care, abandonment or expulsion of the child, inadequate supervision, inattention to avoidable hazards, inadequate care in the clothing, nutrition and hygiene of the child, and other forms of reckless disregard for the child's welfare.<sup>24</sup>

While the incidence of physical abuse within the Mexican descent population (henceforth called Mexican Americans) is less than that of the general population,

<sup>22</sup> The term "pastoral agent" is borrowed from the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Conference of Bishops, 1988) and denotes a bilingual, bicultural lay or ordained minister who works in concert with the whole Church as outlined in this plan.

<sup>23</sup> *Study Findings: Study of National Incidence and Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect: 1988* pages 4-2 through 4-13.

<sup>24</sup> Robert J. Velasquez, Ed. M., "Abuse and Neglect of Low-Income Hispanic Children and Adolescents from a Systems Approach," in Angelina Moreno Torres, J.D., editor, *The Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect: A Focus on the Mexican American Family. Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference September 8-10, 1982* (Laredo, TX: Texas Migrant Council, Inc., 1983), p. 24.

it is nevertheless significant.<sup>25</sup> Several reasons are postulated for this lower rate of abuse. First, the value of family and children in this population makes Mexican Americans very intolerant of physical abuse. Second, they have a more passive and internally-oriented way of coping with life challenges. Third, the extended family provides a circuit breaker effect for the stress, poverty and isolation which are predictors of abuse. Note, however, that these conditions exist in *traditional* Mexican American families: those in the throes of assimilation or migration react quite differently.<sup>26</sup>

More problematic is the issue of neglect, particularly medical neglect. Some studies claim that Mexican American parents or caretakers are twice as likely to neglect the medical needs of their children as the population at large.<sup>27</sup> This does not mean, however, that these parents are necessarily always at fault: reasons for medical neglect are manifold. First, there is the problem of divergent views on what constitutes adequate medical care. If a Mexican American brings her child to a curandero (folk healer), or uses home remedies, is that neglect? Second, there is the problem of migrant workers and the undocumented. Undocumented persons may be barred from medical help, or may fear exposure to the law if they seek it; migrants are often at the mercy of employers who subject them and their children to unsanitary conditions and harmful pesticides and fertilizers.<sup>28</sup> Third is the issue of poverty: if Mexican Americans are denied care for lack of insurance, or if they are forced to choose between feeding their children and providing them preventive medical care, can this neglect be considered the sole fault of the parent? Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, is the cultural chasm which exists between the Mexican American client and the public institutions charged with

<sup>25</sup> The actual statistical difference between the Anglophone and the Mexican American populations are slight. However, the likelihood of a marginal minority whose lives are more open to public scrutiny (through dependence on public aid, social workers etc.) and bias being reported is much greater than that of the dominant population. The fact that, in the face of these obstacles, they are less often reported than the general population is significant. See Adalberto Aguirre, Jr., Ph D., "Child Abuse in the Minority Community: Some observations," in Torres page 13. Also, CAN statistics are calculated by household. The fact that Mexican American households, which tend to be large and youthful, are not therefore more often reported is also significant. See Al Valiunas, "Issues in the Incidence of Child Abuse and Neglect Relative to Mexican-Americans," in Guadalupe Gibson, *Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in the Mexican-American Community May 26-29, 1981* (Laredo, TX: Texas Migrant Council, 1982), p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> "Child Abuse in Minority Populations," in *Connections*, newsletter of the Virginia Child Protection Network, p. 6, and Michael Lauderdale et. al. "Race, Ethnicity, and Child Maltreatment: An Empirical Analysis" in *Child Abuse and Neglect*, volume 4, 1980: 166-167. See also Frederick Cervantes, Ph. D., "New Findings: Attitudes towards Child Abuse and Child Rearing Practices of Mexican American Migrant Parents," in Torres, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Lauderdale, et. al., *Child Deaths in Texas: A Study of Child Deaths Attributed to Abuse and Neglect (1975-1977)* (Austin: The University of Texas, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> Andrés A. Tijerina, Ph D., ed., *Human Services for Mexican American Children* (Austin: The University of Texas, 1978), pages 41-51. Migrant workers may also be physically isolated from medical care: see Lex Berrios, *Child Abuse and Neglect Among Mexican American Migrants: A Study of Cases* (Laredo, TX: The Texas Migrant Council, 1982).



caring for them. Mexican Americans who try to utilize child welfare agencies, medical establishments or mental health facilities often encounter language and cultural barriers or outright discrimination.<sup>29</sup> These institutions are often not within the economic, cultural or legal orbit of this population and there is a consequent low utilization of them: hence the need to explore a self-help model based on Parents Anonymous.

### Causes of Child Abuse and Neglect Among Mexican Americans

Abusers are not differentiated by sex: both male and females abuse (although male children are more likely to be *physically* abused). Nor do abusers generally suffer from severe mental illness: only about ten percent of abusers are pathological. The vast majority are persons who fall somewhere on a continuum of coping behaviors which increasingly cause more problems than they solve.<sup>30</sup> There are three groups of characteristics which help explain CAN: individual, cultural and environmental.

#### Individual Characteristics: Isolation

- 1) A predisposition towards abuse based on a personal experience of abuse or neglect<sup>31</sup> and the resulting isolation from the memory of one's childhood as well as the loss of adequate role models for parenting.
- 2) Having married young and being the parent of young or physically/mentally challenged children<sup>32</sup> resulting in the loss of the honeymoon illusion and felt isolation from any hope in a desirable future.
- 3) Abusing alcohol or drugs<sup>33</sup> resulting in isolation from both society at large and the Mexican American community particularly.
- 4) Being a single parent<sup>34</sup> with the attendant isolation from coparental support.

<sup>29</sup>. Mario Obledo, "Child Abuse and Neglect and the Mexican American Community: Keynote Address," in Gibson, page vii. Also the response of Judge Peña in same, page 54. See Velasquez pgs 27-28 and Benjamin Cuellar, D.S.W., "Program, Policy, Practice, Permanency: Recruitment of Hispanic Parents," in Torres page 93.

<sup>30</sup>. Elizabeth I. Purcell, *Child Abuse: A Controlled Study of Demographic Data and Family Interaction* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilm #8005538-01800, 1980), page 169.

<sup>31</sup>. Guadalupe Gibson, "Methods of Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect among Mexican-American Families," in Gibson page 32.

<sup>32</sup>. Cervantes page 54.

<sup>33</sup>. Celestino Mindiola III, "Alcohol and Drug Abuse: A Contributing Factor to Child Abuse and Neglect," in Gibson, pages 10-15.

<sup>34</sup>. James L. Spearly and Michael Lauderdale, "Community Characteristics and Ethnicity in the Prediction of Child Maltreatment Rates," *Child Abuse and Neglect*, volume 7, 1983: 97.

### Cultural Characteristics: Assimilation

- 1) Separation from one's extended family, country or barrio.<sup>35</sup>
- 2) Other pressures of assimilation.<sup>36</sup>

### Environmental Characteristics: Stress

- 1) The stress resulting from poverty and unemployment.<sup>37</sup>
- 2) The stress and frustration of the cultural chasm between the population and private and public institutions charged with caring from them. Cognitive dissonance results when parents are made to feel inadequate through culturally biased services.<sup>38</sup>

We see then that an individual who is isolated, experiencing cultural assimilation and suffering environmental stress, can easily cross the line to abuse. However, it is a very complicated and risky endeavor to apply blame.

First, one must realize that CAN is at least partly defined by culture. For instance, 89% of Mexican Americans consider a lack of religious training constituent of child neglect: would it be fair to indict anglophone parents on this assumption? Yet Mexican American parents are often judged by cultural assumptions from anglophones. For instance, if they provide what their culture considers staples, they can still be charged with nutritional neglect in some states. If they utilize folk medicine they can be charged with medical neglect. Some of what the public considers CAN is culturally biased, and this must be acknowledged.

Second, there is the very real problem of *institutionalized child abuse*. The environmental factors mentioned above affect all children whether or not their parents are abusive. Poverty, discrimination, cultural imperialism are all institutionalized ways in which we abuse children, especially minority children.

<sup>35</sup>. Guadalupe Gibson, "Mexican American Families in Transition: Problems of Child Abuse and Neglect," in Torres pages 5-8; also Gloria Rodriguez, M.Ed., and Carmen P. Cortez, M.Ed., "Advance, Parent-Child Education--A National Child Abuse and Neglect Demonstration and Research Prevention Program," in Torres pgs. 140-141. See also the dialogue in *First Annual Proceedings*, page 20, and the article by Terri Hernandez Tijerina, "Issues in Mexican-American Adoptions," page 38.

<sup>36</sup>. See dialogue in Gibson pages 29, and also D. Davis Camp and Frederick Cervantes, "Child Abuse and Neglect and the Mexican-American Migrant Worker," pgs. 60-70, and David Hinojosa, Ph.D... "The Self-Concept and Child Abuse," pg.83. Mention is made of the cognitive dissonance which occurs when one is stripped by the dominating culture of one's religious beliefs, natural support systems, and family values.

<sup>37</sup>. Statistics have proven this connection, for instance it has been shown that high unemployment correlates with high child abuse, likewise better public aid benefits correlates with less child abuse.

<sup>38</sup>. See Teddie Melhart, M.S.W., et. al., "Judicial Perspectives on Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings Involving the Mexican-American Child," as well as the recommendations by Judge Enrique H. Peña, in Gibson, pages 33-42.



Some of the abuse and much of the neglect among the Mexican descent population is a cultural adaptation to institutionalized poverty and discrimination.<sup>39</sup>

It is the thesis of this paper that Parents Anonymous can deal directly with the individual and cultural characteristics of abuse, and can deal indirectly (through advocacy) with some of the environmental characteristics. Furthermore, the pastoral agent of the Church is in a privileged position from which to inculcate PA within the Mexican American milieu.

### Parents Anonymous: An Explanation

Parents Anonymous is an assisted, therapeutic self-help organization founded in 1970. From 1970-1974 favorable media attention resulted in some financial stability (through private and government grants), and sustained membership through both promotion and court referrals. In 1975 the leaders participated in the First National Conference on Child Abuse, and PA's 150 local chapters began to officially welcome (and later require) professional assistance. Today PA boasts over 1000 chapters throughout the world (including Mexico) and a 70% success rate. PA offers a peer group of unconditional acceptance in a mutual quest to learn new parenting skills through the "Guidelines for Achievement" and the "Guidelines for Allegiance". It also offers a crisis phone line and networking and referral services.<sup>40</sup>

Like most self-help groups, PA requires a commitment towards behavioral change on behalf of participants (change in their behavior towards the children in their care). It has little bureaucracy or administration, and does not delve into psychodynamic factors. Rather it deals with present symptoms and positive alternatives. PA deals with all physical CAN issues and refuses to judge anyone on the continuum as worse or better. Groups have two facilitating positions: a chairperson who, as a peer, has a child abusing problem, and a professional sponsor (e.g., social worker, clergy person) who acts as a resource to the chairperson by helping him or her become an effective leader.<sup>41</sup> Hence the group is always led by a parent who has recourse to a professional.

A PA chapter can begin with as little as \$150.00. Historically the chapters are more successful where they are *allied* (but not controlled by) a sponsoring agency

<sup>39</sup>. See Ellen Gray and John Cosgrove, "Ethnocentric Perception of Childrearing Practices in Protective Services," *Child Abuse and Neglect*, volume 9, 1985: 390-392. Also Alexander G. Zaphiris, ed., *Protective Services to Abused and Neglected Children and Their Families* (Denver: University of Denver, 1974), pp. 104-122. Hispanic children are poorer than either black or white children. Between 1979 and 1989 the percent of U.S. Hispanic children living in poverty rose from 28% to 36.2% according to *Latino Child Poverty in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1991).

<sup>40</sup>. Patte Wheat, *Hope for the Children: A Personal History of Parents Anonymous* (Minnesota: Winston Press, 1979). Every state has a local PA office and an 800 telephone number. However, the national office is at 6733 South Sepulveda Blvd., Suite 270, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

<sup>41</sup>. Helen Nix, "Why Parents Anonymous?" *Journal of Psychiatric Nursing*, 18(10), Oct., 1980: 23-28.

such as a county mental health service. This provides immediate physical space, continuity of sponsors, and perhaps some office essentials. Soon the PA chapter repays this support with increased client interest as well as a cost-efficient means of helping the agency deal with CAN.<sup>42</sup>

Parents Anonymous has much in common with other self-help models. Like other groups it arose as an inexpensive, consumer-based response to the shortcomings of the professional-client model. Like other self-help models, PA defines its work as correcting certain manageable behaviors (through shared experience), not the treatment of pathology. And it considers a cure the adoption of a particular way of living which distinguishes members from non-members.

However, PA is also distinct from other self-help groups. First, it does not claim that one must be forever recovering, i.e. always a member; one can learn new coping skills and cease attending PA. Second, it accepts outside funding. Third, it does not promote a spirituality, e.g. a Higher Power. Fourth, PA has no defined process of growth; each member creates his or her own process so long as: 1) they are committed to ceasing abusive behavior; 2) they attend PA meetings; 3) they are willing to help others as they are themselves helped; 4) they are willing to grow and allow others to grow; 5) they are supportive to other members within and outside of the group; 6) they respect the confidentiality of the meeting; 7) they call the hotline before a crisis occurs.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, PA differs from other groups because it is *assisted* self-help, i.e. a professional sponsor is always present at local meetings, and the governing boards are staffed with professionals as well. Assisted self-help is a modification of the model, and although participants still provide indispensable mutual support, peer counseling and skill sharing, a sponsor is always present. Sponsors and/or their agency facilitate the group and support the chairperson but also: 1) provide meeting space; 2) provide continuity of sponsors; 3) support members; 4) facilitate an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance; 5) encourage the individual growth of members; 6) maintain a 24 hour crisis line; 7) network with other agencies, the courts or private therapists; 8) report continuous abuse as required by law.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, PA members, not the sponsor, are responsible for change, and there is no set treatment plan. Members are not labeled pathological or crazy but are recognized as persons who need to learn new coping and parenting behaviors. Psychodynamic factors are not treated (although when necessary members are referred to other therapy), but rather present and possible changes are discussed. The primary activity of the group is sharing experiences among peers in a mutually

<sup>42</sup>. Marlin Blizinsky, "Parents Anonymous and the Private Agency: Administrative Cooperation," *Child Welfare*, 61(5) May 1982: 305-311.

<sup>43</sup>. Linda N. Bly, *Self-Help and Child Abuse*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Delaware, 1986, p.21.

<sup>44</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp.20-22. As this is a very delicate issue, it is best to contact the local PA chapter about it.



helpful and accepting setting.<sup>45</sup> PA therefore, although allied with professionals and networking with other agencies, continues to be an autonomous, self-help organization.

There is little doubt that PA has helped thousands of adults change their behavior towards children. The present question is whether this model, developed by middle-class white anglophones, can be successfully inculturated into the Mexican American community without doing violence to either the culture or the treatment program.

### Parents Anonymous as Indigenous Self-Help

Although Mexican Americans under-utilize most public institutions, they are not without resources in times of need. They have come to depend on an indigenous support system made up of the extended family, fictive kin (e.g., compadres), friends, neighbors, clubs, wise persons (e.g., curanderos) and religious leaders. These are non-professional resources who do not promote dependency but interdependency or *mutualismo* among members.<sup>46</sup> When a Mexican American needs a loan, advice, emotional support, or assistance in problem solving s/he very naturally turns to this indigenous self-help. Characteristics of this *mutualismo* are: 1) a recognition of the influence and relative status of each individual; 2) a propensity to be active rather than introspective; 3) an orientation to present immediacy; 4) an informal, personal approach rather than a bureaucratic one; 5) an interdependency.<sup>47</sup>

This *mutualismo* has pre-Columbian roots and post-colonial resiliency. It is a widespread, sophisticated and highly adaptable resource for troubled Mexican American families. If one wishes to offer a culturally compatible approach to any problem within this community therefore, using the natural strength of this *mutualismo* is imperative.<sup>48</sup>

How does Parents Anonymous compare with this *mutualismo*? The parallels are striking. PA both recognizes the need for certain influential persons (i.e., the sponsor) but also insists on the mutual support and responsibility of its members. PA promotes active, immediate behavioral changes rather than introspective therapy. PA is informal and non-bureaucratic, and moreover, maintains the anonymity necessary to deal with delicate problems.

There are parallels as well between what PA offers and what are the needs characteristic of Mexican American perpetrators. Abusers are characterized by

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-161. PA also has a "Kids Anonymous" program.

<sup>46</sup> For another discussion of "Mexican *mutualismo*" see Kenneth Davis, "A.A.: Making it User Friendly," *Apuntes*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 36-43.

<sup>47</sup> Marvin Delgado, "Hispanic Natural Support Systems: Implications for Mental Health Services," *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 21(4) April 1983: 19-24.

<sup>48</sup> Juan Ramon Valle, *Amistad-Compadrazgo as an Indigenous Webwork Compared with the Urban Mental Health Network*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Southern California, 1974.

isolation from their natural support system (e.g., extended family); PA offers a new support system, a kind of fictive kin made up of peers who understand, through their own experience, mutual problems, and provide the nurturing and acceptance of a natural family. Abusers often exhibit signs of cognitive dissonance due to the pressures of assimilation; PA, when made up of the same culture/language group, can challenge this assimilation and offer traditional Mexican American parenting as an alternate (and proven successful) parenting model. PA offers the networking and referral capabilities to deal with alcoholism and substance abuse, a crisis line for continued support, and known members, sponsors and chairpersons as resources outside of group meetings. It insists (like the concept of *machismo*) on self-reliance and the ability of the human to master her/his own life. PA offers structure for a shattered life, and can directly address the individual and cultural characteristics of the Mexican American caught in the conundrum of child abuse.

The potential for Parents Anonymous (indeed most self-help programs) within the Mexican American community is obvious. PA utilizes the natural strength of the culture, and directly addresses many of the characteristics of CAN within the culture. It gives people the right and the power to name their own reality rather than accept the label of deviant from persons who do not understand them or their culture. Although only about 2% of its members are Mexican American (approximately 28% are of other minority groups), and some of its literature is not available yet in Spanish, the essential PA treatment model can be sensitively inculcated within the Mexican American community. This creates an invitation to the pastoral agent to wed the essential *mutualismo* of the culture to the potential held in PA.

### **Role of the Pastoral Agent**

The pastoral agent is in a unique position to promote PA within the Mexican American community. As a church minister, and as a respected member of the *mutualismo* network, s/he is a person to whom this community will naturally turn in time of crisis. Also s/he has access precisely to those networking resources most helpful in initiating PA into any community: many churches (especially the large urban ones where this population is most likely to be found) have substantial medical and social service capabilities. It is from religious hospitals, charities and similar groups that one can draw referrals, sponsors and perhaps the limited financial backing necessary to launch a new PA chapter.

Most importantly, however, the pastoral minister can help PA enter the meaning-making milieu of the Mexican American community by casting its insights into a culturally understandable (therefore necessarily spiritual) language.

Even the smallest, poorest, most isolated church has important resources in the persons of the educators of the young. Whether catechists or professionals at an accredited school, educators of Mexican American children (if properly trained) are the persons most helpful in identifying abuse, and as such need to be enlisted in any compassionate, culturally sensitive program of CAN treatment aimed at this



population.<sup>49</sup> In fact, because catechists are most likely to themselves be Mexican American, and because 90% of Mexican American children receive their religious education in these informal programs, those teachers (usually lay and volunteer) are a humble but exceptionally valuable resource which any pastoral agent can enlist. Training them to identify abuse, and networking with other church sponsored institutions (for sponsor support, and monies) are two primary ways in which the pastoral agent can use her/his natural right of entree into the community to create the possibility of a Mexican American PA chapter.

Educating both the Mexican descent population in general, and professionals in particular, is another way to prepare for a PA chapter. Child protective services, the courts, and other professional groups can be important sources of referrals and support if they can be convinced that PA is not an adversary, but an important resource in their common concern of rehabilitating abusive parents. Likewise, educating the Mexican American populace about PA is necessary. It is vital to show that PA supports the values of this population (e.g., religion and the family) and only wishes to modify certain behavioral expressions (e.g., incorrect discipline) precisely in order to support those values. In other words, PA must be presented as a cultural antidote which helps persons fulfill their own traditional values as Mexican Americans.<sup>50</sup>

To summarize, a pastoral agent can prepare the community to accept PA by: 1) networking with church medical and social service agencies especially for sponsors and funding; 2) enlisting and training the educators of the young, especially catechists; 3) networking with Child Protective Services and other professionals; 4) demonstrating to the Mexican Americans that PA supports their traditional values and wants to help those who are isolated or under stress to do the same.

However, Parents Anonymous itself must also be prepared if it is to be successfully introduced; fortunately the organization seems to be open to this.<sup>51</sup>

First, more PA documents must be translated into barrio Spanish and must be culturally supplemented. Second, the meetings must be open to talk about the Mexican American's manifold approach to the Divine: the role of Mary, God, and the saints mirror the role of mother, father and extended family for the Mexican American. In order to talk about the role of parents and extended family this meaning-making milieu must be broached. For instance, certain specific issues such as machismo must be addressed with an adapted PA ideology (e.g., by emphasizing faith, will power, self-control, the nurturing role of mother and the

<sup>49</sup>. See Raymond Buriel, et.al., "Child Abuse and Neglect Referral Patterns of Anglo and Mexican Americans," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 1(3) 1979: 215-227. Also Kathryn J. Lindholm and Richard Willey, *Child Abuse and Ethnicity: Patterns of Similarities and Differences* (Los Angeles: Spanish Speaking Mental Health Research Center [Occasional Paper #18], 1983).

<sup>50</sup>. See "Hispanic America" in *Social Thought*, 11(3), Summer 1985. Also *Cultural and Ethnic Awareness Manual for Professionals Working with Mexican-American Migrant Families* (Laredo, TX: The Texas Migrant Council).

<sup>51</sup>. The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, *The National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, April 16-19, 1978* (New Jersey: Rutgers Medical School), pp.73-76; 94-95.

protective role of father). Fourth, a more consistent membership may be necessary so that there are enough veterans to socialize newcomers. Fifth, the role of the chairperson must be adapted: a democratic style ought to be used, but his/her leadership will rest on certain personal intangibles such as a spiritual reawakening. Careful initial selection and firm support from the sponsor is necessary to insure a chairperson who is neither autocratic nor dominated. Sixth, it appears that more than one sponsor, or better a whole agency, ought to adopt a PA chapter. One sponsor, especially if s/he is the only bilingual professional, may be overtaxed or marginalized as a token. Also an agency-wide effort supports the sponsor, and can offer such collateral aid as an inviting space or babysitting services. Seventh, it is important to allow members to name themselves, their problem and their progress and use the *dichos* (sayings) and other folk wisdom of the people. Lastly, the PA state and national offices ought to be enlisted in all of these endeavors but also in targeting education/prevention to this specific population, and in advocating a change in those environmental conditions that institutionalize CAN.<sup>52</sup>

Mexican Americans in crisis naturally turn to known, respected members of their own community. Pastoral agents, as members of this community, can demonstrate to them the consistency between their values and that of PA, and at the same time can adapt PA so that it can be more culturally compatible with this population. The pastoral agent can use the language of religious conversion as a means of translating the PA promise held out to the Mexican descent parent who is paralyzed by the shame and inadequacy felt when they fail to be the caregivers they and their culture desire. It is this language which will make PA intelligible within the meaning-making milieu of that community. While perhaps not a match made in heaven it can be one made in hell, the hell of child abuse and neglect. And from this wedding made in hell the pastoral agent can midwife a rebirth of both the parent and the child so that they can then become a healthy and holy family.

### *Resumen*

*El abuso de los niños es menos frecuente en la comunidad México-americana de lo que podría esperarse. Esto, a pesar de que muchas de las estadísticas, y el modo en que se compilan, reflejan prejuicios raciales. En todo caso, sí hay tal abuso. El presente artículo explora sus causas, y cómo el programa de "Parents Anonymous" puede ayudar al agente pastoral a responder a ellas.*

<sup>52</sup> A.T. Hamilton, *An Exploratory Study of Therapeutic Self-Help Child Abuse Groups for Low-Income Minority Populations* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1980). Hamilton conducted a case study of Mexican American Parents Anonymous chapters and these suggestions include some based on that work.



## Reseñas bibliográficas

Elsa Támez, *Contra toda condena* (San José, Costa Rica: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1991).

George Cruz

Uno de los propósitos de Elsa Támez es reafirmar su fe como cristiana protestante en América Latina. Por ende su aporte en el presente trabajo.

El tema o la doctrina de la justificación por la fe generalmente se ha visto desde un punto de vista vertical, o sea, como el proceso por medio del cual el ser humano entra en buen estado de relación con su Dios. La pregunta clave que Támez hace a la temática de la justificación por la fe es, "¿Qué tiene que decir la justificación por la fe a la víctimas del pecado?" ¿Será la justificación por la fe una cuestión válida? Estas son preguntas que Támez trabaja. Lo que valida estas preguntas es la realidad existencial del pueblo sufrido y explotado que se encuentra en el contexto socio-histórico del América Latina hoy.

El tema de la justificación por la fe, según Támez, ha sido vulgarizado en los círculos protestantes de América Latina. Ella concluye que para justificar lo opresión del ofensor o de los sistemas estructurales de injusticia la justificación por la fe se ha convertido en el legalismo moderno. La justificación por la fe en el sentido vulgarizado se ha convertido en la ley.

La doctrina de la justificación por la fe no ha estado en acorde o armonía con la realidad contextual de América Latina. Esta es la afirmación que la autora hace.

La obra de Támez es una "relectura de la justificación por la fe desde la perspectiva latinoamericana", o sea, a partir del marco de la teología latinoamericana de la liberación la cual tiene al pobre y al excluido como punto de referencia y lugar teológico privilegiado. La doctrina tradicional de la justificación por la fe representa una relectura que se ha hecho del evangelio, una lectura que ha divorciado a la justificación por la fe de la presencia permanente del juicio escatológico de Dios que se encuentra consistentemente en Pablo. Ella concluye que "Ni la salvación por la gracia, ni la justificación por la fe elimina la exigencia de una práctica honesta de la justicia, propia del justificado", la falta de la cual produce el justo juicio de Dios.

El análisis que la autora hace en esta obra sobre la temática comienza con una observación del uso común de la justificación por la fe. Luego después de esta observación ella reflexiona en torno a unos ensayos de relectura que intentan recuperar el tema, y así concluye su primer capítulo con un desafío para el replanteo del mismo.

Támez no vuelve al tradicional punto de partida acostumbrado "sobre la disyuntiva fe u obras, o contraponer la iniciativa de Dios a la del ser humano". Ella cree que la situación actual en América Latina exige buscar nuevos discursos teológicos sobre la justificación que respondan a dicha situación.

Son dos factores los que la motivan a interrogar a la doctrina de la justificación por la fe de raíz: La muerte física y el hambre que padecen los "excluidos", p. 16.

Vida para todos es la conclusión de su reflexión, p. 159. "La justificación por la fe debe estar orientada hacia la afirmación de la vida, la vida real de las personas", p. 48. El obstáculo para tal conclusión es "la fuerte carga confesional" que para ella "clausura otros sentidos posibles liberadores que el texto bíblico permite recoger", p. 17. Su trabajo no tiene como interés lo "polémico-confesional", p. 29.

La profesora Támez elabora su tesis en tres capítulos. El primero busca reformular la doctrina en el contexto de pobreza y discriminación. El segundo busca nuevas luces en el texto bíblico que iluminen sentidos liberadores de la justificación por la fe a partir del marco de la historia interhumana, es decir, la situación concreta de Pablo y el Imperio Romano, p. 51. Ella afirma que Pablo elabora dicha doctrina "desafiado por el contexto socio-económico del Imperio Romano, y a la vez por uno o más grupos de cristianos judaizantes que tendían a excluir a aquellos que no cumplían las observancias de la ley", p. 113. El tercer capítulo se compone de una relectura de la justificación por la fe desde América Latina hoy.

Es importante notar que la escritora aclara desde el comienzo que su trabajo fue influenciado por una bibliografía específica. Por ejemplo, el primer capítulo, así como el tercero, fueron influenciados por una bibliografía latinoamericana, o como ella la describe, por "las voces teológicas de nuestro continente". Esto, sin desprestigiar la contribución europea y norteamericana. Por razones obvias la investigación bíblica del segundo capítulo es "sustentada por una bibliografía mayormente del primer mundo" aunque no necesariamente su metodología hermenéutica.

Después de hacer su observación y análisis de reflexión en torno a los ensayos de relectura sobre justificación por la fe a partir de América Latina, Támez inicia su búsqueda por esas "nuevas luces" del texto bíblico que iluminan ese sentido liberador de la justificación por la fe a partir de la experiencia interhumana.

Comenzando con la I de Tesalonicenses, y haciendo el recorrido por la literatura paulina, propone que la justificación por la fe se ha de entender a partir de la experiencia cotidiana de los creyentes primitivos dentro del contexto específico de cada grupo de destinatarios. La diferencia de énfasis en cada escrito es notable, p. 85. Citando a Daniel Patte, Támez escribe, "Según la fe de Pablo es la experiencia de los creyentes la que establece para ellos el principio de organización de sus convicciones, el fundamento de su fe", p. 79.

En su capítulo final Támez hace una relectura ya con una nueva perspectiva del texto bíblico en mente. La experiencia que ella analiza como punto de partida para la organización de las convicciones que sirven como el "fundamento de su fe", p. 79, es la experiencia de los excluidos, p. 137. Dice:

Nos toca ahora retomar nuevamente el kerygma, es decir, la vida, muerte y resurrección de Jesús, y, con la ayuda de Pablo, reinterpretar, profundizar y tratar de avanzar en su propuesta de la justificación por la fe para nosotros hoy. Sin este esfuerzo el mensaje de la justificación no será relevante, porque no responderá a la necesidad del hombre y la mujer de nuestro continente, p. 138.



La mayoría de los cuales son excluidos, a lo cual ella dice, "ningún justificado por la fe puede aceptar ningún proyecto de vida que excluya vidas, la exclusión misma niega la finalidad del proyecto que de por sí es comunitario", p. 159.

La obra de Támez es una obra de profundidad teológica superior. Muy bien puede llegar a ser el texto clave para la reflexión en torno al tema de la justificación por la fe a partir de la experiencia protestante hispano parlante tanto en la América Latina así como en Norte América.

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José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia, PA.: Fortress Press, 1983), 126 pp.

*Raúl Fernández Calienes*

This book presents a basic, introductory essay which seeks to move (as its title states) "toward" a Christian political ethics. It does not claim to be a comprehensive or final treatise on the subject, but rather a sort of 'discussion-starter.' This, the author hopes, will motivate other people to take-on the issues more completely, to write about their insights and conclusions, and more importantly, to get personally involved with the political realities of our day.

The author is known as one of, if not the, premier Protestant theologians of modern-day Latin America. He was an eminent Professor of Systematic Theology, and Dean at the Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is also a popular lecturer, a prolific writer, and a renowned ecumenist. Having also been an official Protestant Observer at the Vatican II Council, and a former President of the World Council of Churches. He is, therefore, well-qualified to write and speak on theology and about Latin America.

In the presentation of the book, the author makes a case for the need for a political ethics, gives some historical background on "the ethical dilemma," and then gives more detailed information using the situation in Latin America as a concrete historical context for us to work with. At the end, and based on his presentation, he makes a call for action.

Some of the major issues in Míguez Bonino's argument are praxis, historical project and utopia, and a movement "from conviction to strategy." Praxis is essential to the author. He sees that we cannot help but place our theological understandings within the realm of a concrete, historical context. He believes we must not only do theology and ethics in theory, but we must also do these here and now, in our present realities, with the tremendous suffering, pain, and death of so many in our world today. Otherwise, we run the risk of only doing theory. He states that praxis should inform reflexion, which should then inform praxis. As he makes the case for the need for a current Christian political ethic, he is at the same time seeking to place that ethic within the broader picture of praxis.

The importance of this approach is that it does not let us off the hook. We are inexorably tied to a people, a place, a time, or some other "reality." While it is important to do theory, we are not free to do it exclusively; this is far too much

of a luxury in our world today. We are bound to live in the world, to reflect on that world, and then to continue living in that world.

The next two issues, "historical project" and "utopia," are also very important to the author. They are not the same, and he is careful to make some distinctions between them. A "historical project," he believes, is a realistic, attainable goal to be worked for. A "utopia," on the other hand, is a more unrealistic, unattainable ideal. He sees that it is possible to analyze the problems of our current human situation, and then to use such historical projects in order to move us toward positive social change. A historical project is not necessarily a utopia, and vice-versa. Rather, he sees that "utopic thinking" can be a positive influence on our society.

This is critically important for us today as we face many, many problems which all too often appear quite insurmountable. Turning to his example of Latin America we can see great poverty, massive unemployment, and a huge debt to foreign creditor --to just scratch the surface. If we consider Míguez Bonino's "historical project" approach, then it seems we may have at least a bit of hope. If we accept and put into place his non-utopic, realistic approach, then it seems we may have at least a chance to address and alleviate even some of the horrible pain and suffering of so many of our fellow human beings.

A final issue, the movement "from conviction to strategy," is also quite central to the author. He believes that movement of this type is not only obvious, but required. He is quite clear that we must not remain "in the clouds," as it were. He is making the case that with so much suffering in Latin America and the world in general, we must get involved. It is not enough to "be convicted" and then "do nothing" about this. Here again, the importance of this is that if we take him seriously, we must get involved and take a stand, on any number of issues that confront us today.

The following are some general comments on the work. First of all, the book is extremely well organized and systematic. Míguez Bonino makes a point, explains it, relates it to another point, and then explains and relates that one, and so on. The arguments the author is elaborating are, therefore, very easy to follow. While some may consider it to be too much like a cookbook recipe (with its continual use of points one, two, three, etc.), others may find this to be very helpful in understanding some of the convoluted connections and inter-connections of our complex, modern society.

Secondly, the author is obviously well-read and well-informed. He demonstrates an amazing mastery of theology, philosophy, literature, history, politics, and other fields. He is familiar with a wide variety and an extremely diverse group of authors and their works --from classics such as Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Luther, to such contemporaries such as Barth, Marx, Desroche, Habermas, Yoder, Boff, and Assmann. It is impressive to see him making numerous and even intelligible references in, and citing sources from, at least eight languages! His reputation as an eminent scholar is well deserved.

Thirdly, the author seems to be doing socio-historical ethics. That is, he seems to be more closely associated with a socio-historical analysis than with the more commonly practiced "traditional" development of ethics in the political area. As has been mentioned elsewhere, he begins with a concrete historical situation, as



opposed to a theoretical or normative concept. His starting point, his line of argument, and his ending points are, therefore, quite different from many of today's ethicists. This is not necessarily "bad." In fact, quite the contrary, his approach leads him to insights that would otherwise be difficult, if not impossible.

Fourthly, the author takes a number of very definite positions and claims them. He is not afraid to "take sides" on a number of issues and approaches. Further, he is not afraid to claim boldly that he is doing so, and to explain (and even, sometimes, not explain) why he is doing so. Míguez Bonino has clearly made the "option for the poor," so much spoken about in current theological discussions. He is clearly moved by themes of justice and hope to take on the powers-that-be. It is encouraging to see that the author and the work are not afraid to make bold statements or to take stands.

Lastly, the author makes some very definite claims on the reader. Just as he is not afraid to take sides, he is also not afraid to ask the reader to take sides. He is presenting the information, but it is not a passive presentation. He is clearly doing this to engage the reader, and to motivate her or him to greater comprehension, conviction, and action.

Míguez Bonino succeeds in his efforts to begin the discussion. It is now up to us to move toward a Christian political ethics.

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Luis Eduardo Castaño, Pedro Briseño Chávez, eds., *Memoria Indígena* (Bogotá: CELAM, 1991), 87 pp.

Brother Jeffrey Gros, FSC

During the process of reflecting on the last five hundred years of Christianity in the Western hemisphere and its impact on indigenous peoples, the opportunity to listen to Native American voices will be a central obligation of all concerned. This short volume brings together voices from Mexico, Maya-Quiche, Quechua and Caribe peoples for the reflection of the IV General Conference of the Latin American Roman Catholic Bishops and others. The testimonies and documentation are preparatory to consultations on these themes throughout Latin America, and the major Conference meeting in October.

The materials gathered here are both historical and contemporary indigenous voices, touching on precolumbian culture and its values, the encounter of the cultures and the indigenous contribution to subsequent developments of Christianity as well as the wide variety of concerns, religious, political, social, cultural, familial, economic and the like, before these communities today.

The majority of the text is either quotations from indigenous texts or contemporary Native American voices, edited to give maximum access to the reader. Each segment is divided into historical testimony and review of the history, living memories and contemporary voices.

The book will not only be useful during this year of review and reassessment, but will also provide a helpful short resource for raising consciousness about the



richness of these different communities, their history and contemporary contributions.

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Marcos Antonio Ramos, *Historia de las religiones* (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1989), 400 pp.

Javier Quiñones-Ortiz

El polifacético autor de esta obra, quien es pastor, historiador y periodista, nos ofrece por medio de la misma una introducción sumamente concisa y sustanciosa al estudio de la disciplina de la historia de las religiones. La misma fue escrita como parte de una serie general titulada *Cómo dominar*. Editorial Playor lanzó, bajo este ambicioso título, toda una serie de obras introductorias a las principales disciplinas de estudio en la lengua y literatura, las ciencias físicas y matemáticas, las ciencias empresariales, las humanidades y las ciencias sociales. Es ésta una serie poco conocida en nuestro contexto, pero de inmenso valor intelectual y literario. El trabajo del Dr. Ramos está a la par con obras de similar propósito en cualquier otro idioma. De hecho, no existe obra alguna en el idioma español y originalmente escrita por un autor hispano, que le supere.

En su contenido se nos introduce primeramente a la disciplina misma de la historia de las religiones, comenzando con algunas creencias prehistóricas y religiones de la antigüedad, pasando por los principales movimientos religiosos del mundo, hasta llegar a las más recientes formas de religiosidad de nuestro siglo. Su tratamiento de las diversas corrientes de pensamiento religioso, su origen histórico, principales figuras, creencias predominantes, etc., es sumamente breve. Pero, el autor nos brinda más que suficiente información para introducir al lector de una forma sumamente efectiva e interesante a los grupos descritos. Su perspectiva es decididamente amplia, respetuosa y seria.

Me parece que un estudio como este es sumamente significativo para aquellos que están relacionados o interesados en el fenómeno religioso humano dentro de un contexto multireligioso como el nuestro. A menudo oímos hablar de distintos movimientos religiosos que, a pesar de que nos resultan hartamente familiares, en realidad no conocemos fehacientemente. Sería pretencioso suponer que uno debería o podría ser un experto en toda religión humana --después de todo hay tan sólo un Mircea Eliade. Sin embargo, al menos sería sumamente útil conocer los aspectos primordiales de aquellas corrientes religiosas más cercanas al ministerio hispano en los EE.UU. Esta obra hace eso y mucho más.

Próximas ediciones de esta obra se beneficiarían mucho de un tratamiento más extenso de las teologías cristianas de liberación, las teologías políticas europeas, las teologías de contextualización africanas y un mejor tratamiento sobre el Vaticano II. De igual forma, resultaría imperativo reevaluar aquellas referencias al fenómeno religioso tras la desaparecida "cortina de hierro".



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